



California Public Utilities Commission

505 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94102

News Release

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Media Contact: PUC Press Office, 415.703.1366, news@cpuc.ca.gov

PUC TAKES LEGAL ACTION TO GUARD CONSUMERS FROM UNLAWFUL MOVING AND CHARTER-PARTY CARRIER COMPANIES

The California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) today announced that an illegal charter-party carrier had one of its buses impounded after violating a PUC-obtained court order barring its operation and that another PUC investigation has resulted in the sentencing of the owner of a moving company for unlawful operation.

“The PUC is committed to stopping companies that continue to operate after having their operating license revoked by the Commission,” said Richard W. Clark, director of the PUC’s Consumer Protection and Safety Division (CPSD). “Protecting consumers from companies that are illegally doing business is a top priority for the Commission, as this type of behavior can seriously impact consumers. These rogue companies give a bad name to all the properly operating moving and passenger carrier companies in the state.”

The PUC filed for a preliminary injunction in the Superior Court in Tulare County on April 9, 2003, against Bill and Gloria Dennis, doing business as Tour Designs, when the company continued operating after the PUC denied renewal of its operating license for failing a California Highway Patrol safety inspection. The preliminary injunction, issued on April 30, 2003, restrained Tour Designs from operating until the Commission issued an operating license.

After obtaining the preliminary injunction, a CPSD investigation determined that Tour Designs continued to operate in spite of the court order. The PUC then filed for an indirect contempt proceeding on June 9, 2003, for violation of the court order. The court then ordered the seizure of one bus, payment of a \$1,000 fine, and payment of legal costs to the Commission. The Commission has also opened a formal investigation to determine whether Tour Designs’ renewal

application to operate should be denied. A hearing was held on May 27, 2003, and the matter is under submission to the Commission.

Another investigation by CPSD that led to a criminal complaint being filed with the Los Angeles City Attorney's office has resulted in the sentencing of the owner of Nation Wide Moving, Inc., based in Sylmar, CA. CPSD conducted an investigation beginning in October 2002, and determined that the owner of Nation Wide Moving, David Suffrin, had continued to operate his business after the PUC revoked his operating permit. The investigation also uncovered violations of PUC consumer protection rules that movers are required to follow.

Suffrin, who was arraigned in Los Angeles Superior Court on June 18, 2003, pleaded no contest to six counts of violation of the Public Utilities Code. Suffrin was placed on 36 months probation; ordered to serve 30 days of Caltrans duty to remove graffiti or jail; ordered to pay \$2,000 in investigative costs; and pay \$1,500 in restitution to the victim in addition to any amount awarded in the pending small claims court case.

The Public Utilities Code makes it a crime to engage or attempt to engage in transporting used household goods without a valid PUC license. Consumers using unlicensed movers may suffer irreparable losses of personal belongings with little means of recovery.

The Public Utilities Code makes it a misdemeanor to engage in for-hire passenger transportation prior to the issuance or renewal of an operating authority.

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